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ABSTRACT

Although children make up one third of the United States population, they receive only a small fraction of public resources. Our society's disregard for children is also manifested through television and through the court and educational systems. Asian and Pacific American children suffer disproportionately from the poverty and inadequate care that afflict millions of American children. Though few figures are available, some limited information about Asian Americans in Los Angeles helps to illustrate the critical situation in regard to child care. At least 1,000 children in Los Angeles's "Chinatown" are estimated to need care. However, the two programs available together serve only 200. One, Castelar Children's Center, is a large facility which emphasizes English and pre-public school preparation. The other, a small unlicensed facility which serves 20 children, is run primarily in Cantonese and emphasizes a blend of Cantonese culture and pre-public school skills. Castelar has little parent participation, while in the smaller center, parent involvement and community support are relatively high. Contrasts between the programs highlight certain criteria for adequate institutional day care: parent and community involvement, preparation of children for public schools, and bilingual teachers who are able to fulfill basic emotional and psychological needs of children. (Author/GC)

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BILINGUAL DAY CARE PROGRAMMING FOR ASIAN CHILDREN

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Bilingual Day Care Programming for Asian Children

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I. The Child in America

Even though we are focusing on Asian and Pacific American children, I am starting with a discussion of the child in America. The American context has a powerful impact on considerations having to do with any group in America because this country is the home of the children and their families under consideration. Matters concerning child care are a part of the large question of general American attitudes and practices concerning children; how America handles and regards its children is of great importance for sensing contraints on the child care situation, for assessing the relationships of harmony and conflict and of power.

We are a nation which claims to value children. Let's look at this assumption a little more closely, first through some statistical data:*

1) Over 1/3 of the population of America (some 73 million individuals) is less than 18 years of age;

*From the spring, 1978, issue of *California Professors of Early Childhood Education.*

2) Approximately 20 million children are under 6 years of age. At least 5 million of these children live in poverty, and the proportion of children in poverty is higher in ethnic or national minority groups than in the population in general;

3) The approximate number of children under 6 years of age whose mothers work is 6.5 million. Increasing numbers of mothers in two-parent families are working in relation to the number of single mothers who work. Data concerning Asian and Pacific American families indicate that the number of working mothers in this general group is greater than in any other culturally distinct group;

4) The portion of children in poverty who live in single-parent families headed by the mother is over 50 percent. The child is twice as likely to be poor if the mother is the single parent;

5) Children in poverty, when compared to children above poverty, are more likely to have less opportunity for education, earn less as adults, experience poorer health and development, and have more involvement in delinquency and crime.

A woman named Francis Walker has this to say about the American relationship to its children:

> Children make up (nearly) 49% of the population, 100% of the future, and receive .07% of the public money.

A system which keeps a disproportionate share of its children in poverty is certainly saying something about how valuable the children are. Beyond the statistics, however, lies the issue of perception – how we perceive children in this country.

Historically, approximately until the beginning of this century, children in western societies were seen as miniature adults – as small beings who were not only of inadequate size but in need of correcting and shaping from birth onwards to remove basic flaws. Occasionally, as was true with Protestantism, religion was used as a support for the view that children are born flawed and in need of thorough adult-furnished correction. (I am mindful that individuals in any time vary from the norm, and that there were champions of children even in these harsher times. The point remains that insofar as a social view exists, my comments are accurate.)

The work of Froebel, Montessori, Piaget, Dewey, and others contributed to a growing social awareness that children are not born defective, that they need certain kinds of conditions for development to be realized, that they have certain physical, mental, emotional, and psychological needs, and that they are *different* in some basic, important ways from adults. I am reminded here of our national example often used to equate all males as basically equal, regardless of wealth, power, ethnicity, station, etc. We are told that even the most powerful and prestige-holding males 'put on their trousers one leg at a time.' But have you ever noticed how a toddler puts on his or her trousers? Further, the young child looks around a lot; they neither understand or follow schedules; they perceive and speak in self-centered ways which are defined by the 'here and now;' they see the world from the height of two or three feet; they are powerless, in contrast to even the most down-and-out adult; and so on.

But socially, how widespread and meaningful are these changing understandings of children?

Let us return to our statistical data again. We saw that there are approximately 20 million children in the U.S. under 6 years of age. We also know that there are at least 6.5 million of these children in homes where the parent, or both parents work; these 6.5 million children are presumably and hopefully in some sort of care. However, there are only 900,000 children in day care centers (approximately 14% of the total in care); accurate data concerning child care homes are not available, but the most generous estimates indicate that

60 to 65% of children in out-of-home care are in day care homes. This leaves from 10 to 20% of the children whose parents do not provide daytime care (over 1 million) without any recognizable care-giving support at all. Further, it is estimated that at least 2 million children are receiving inadequate care, largely due to the twin factors of the low prestige and monetary base for child care, and the inadequacy of state child care licensing and supervision standards and provisions. Again, we have to ask what these data indicate about our society's sense of the value and importance of children.

A non-statistical sense of what I consider to be a woefully inadequate view of children in contemporary U.S. society can be recognized in television's programming for children. We read that our children spend more time watching television than they do in any other activity, including school attendance. With rare exception, TV programming for children consists of high violence and excess activity performed by highly stereotyped characters who rely on force, sorcery, extra-human powers, or stupidity to accomplish their aims. Commerical interruptions pander food products which are high in sugar and low in nutrition, or goods which often have no fruitful, developmentally-sound relationship to the child's play. Further, evidence is mounting that children are affected by the programs they watch, in a more-or-less direct manner (that is, violence begets violence; callousness begets callousness, etc.). Additional evidence is available to shed light on the effect of quantities of passive, visual TV entertainment on the child's self-concept, sense of purpose, understanding of the social and physical environments, sense of persistence, and so on; the effect seems to be negative.

And yet, the programming available continues largely unchanged. This aspect of the child in America could be dealt with in greater depth, for it is a rare home – Asian American, Pacific American, or otherwise, that does not have television; and much of the television viewing available to children is unsupervised.

Still more evidence could be given to indicate the relatively small importance attached to children – such as the various movements in this country (adult liberation movements, self-exploration or self-development movements, 'look out for number 1' (now 2) kinds of movements or ethics, etc.), all of which address adult concerns only – in spite of their clear impact on the children we raise; or the legal differentiation which considers a child to be both totally subordinate to, and inferior to, the adult. For example, it is a very rare phenomenon to have the interests of the child considered in divorce or separation proceedings. Ordinarily, the child is regarded in much the same way as are other pieces of property to be parceled out.

Or consider this paraphrase from a recent article in a local newspaper. A 34-year-old parent who refused to take her starving 4-year-old daughter to a doctor until the child died pleaded guilty to one count of felony child endangering. She was released on $5,000 bail, and faces between 16 months and three years in prison. Consider just for a moment what punishment we give for robbery, in contrast, especially if the accused is poor. Often, no bail is set and prison sentences run as many as 20 years or more. Again, one has to ask about the relative importance of the child in America.

Much more could be said about this woeful situation which places the child in America in such low esteem. I bring it to your attention in this brief manner because one of the basic needs of *all* children is for concerned *advocates.* In a society which accords children inadequate value and no power, those of us with some power are obligated to use it as we can to develop a stronger public conscience and sense of value and support for children.

This is especially true of the children of Asian and Pacific American parents, for American society accords these people – the smaller, more silent minority groups in this country – even less attention that the other, larger, and more vocal minority minority groups receive.

II. Asian and Pacific American Children and Their Families

Data concerning Asian and Pacific American children and their families are hard to come by and very partial. Most of you reading this will likely have more of this information than I do. The data I will report here are from articles by Kenyon Chan concerning Asian American preschool children and families in Los Angeles dated 1975, the Los Angeles County public schools census of 1978, and interviews with two directors of child care centers in the Los Angeles 'Chinatown.'

Asian American families in Los Angeles, then:

1) In two-parent families, fathers work six days per week, and the length of the working day of the father is longer than average. Presumably, little time and energy are left for family and children;

2) In two-parent families, the approximate percentages of mothers who work by national group insofar as data are available, are as follows:

Hawaiian	23%	Pilipino	65%
Japanese	35%	Chinese	78%
Korean	55%		

Data were not available for other groups such as Vietnamese and Cambodians. Guesses and opinion indicate that high percentages of mothers in these two groups work;

3) Estimates indicate that at least 1,000 children in the Los Angeles 'Chinatown' need out-of-home care. However, the total number of children who can be served by present child care programs is 199. There are only two child care programs (a large children's center operated by the public schools and a small, struggling cooperative day care center); there are no full-day Head Start programs serving this population, and day care homes are woefully few in number and very difficult to identify;

4) Child care outside the home by people who are not related to the child is culturally not desirable.

I was not able to locate data concerning other locations in California or other states. Since so many decisions regarding the provision and support of child care depend on statistical information, one of the greatest needs for those concerned with out-of-home care for Asian American and Pacific American children is the gathering of such data.

In addition to this information, I have gathered subjective opinions based on my visiting the two child care centers serving these children and several individuals who either work in child care or are knowledgeable about child care for this population:

1) The number of child care centers and licensed homes in communities with a concentration of these families is very small and well below the need. Waiting lists are long and alternatives are few and inadequate. Home care is almost nonexistent.

2) The number of adults with training and motivation to work in child care in these communities is startlingly inadequate.

3) Parent gratitude is great; parent participation and involvement is very limited.

4) Financial problems of child care centers in these communities are even more severe than such problems in child care centers serving other ethnic or national groups. This may be at least partly due to the reported reluctance of parents to use the social services available; reimbursement cannot happen without application.

I have little to say about the nature of child rearing practices in the wide variety of families we are concerned with, or about the composition of the families, or about the

values, aspirations, occupational patterns, etc. of these families. First, the data is very inadequate and sketchy; and second, the variation *within* an ethnic group is greater than *between* groups. And the most important third, statistical data and sociological description is always reduced to averages and norms; such information is of use to salespeople or tax-gatherers, but it is not of much use to child care workers. My advice to me and you is to learn from the people we have contact with, contact which is more than trivial.

III. Brief Description of Programs Visited

I have been speaking in general areas thus far, in my effort to put child care matters for Asian American and Pacific American children into some sort of perspective. I would like to go now to something more specific to develop this context further. I will summarize the characteristics of the two programs I visited. After this, we will go to a general level again and look at some aspects of the basic needs of all children before returning to some final specifics regarding the provision of good child care for Aisan American and Pacific American children.

Castelar Children's Center

Castelar Children's Center is operated by the Los Angeles Public Schools and is located in downtown 'Chinatown.' It is well funded, generously equipped and staffed, and enjoys a large, spacious facility. It probably represents a 'state-of-the-art' child care center operation in this country. It serves approximatley 180 children, ages 2 through 8; the waiting list was allowed to grow to 300 families and was then cut off. Castelar follows what can be called a standard day care schedule and emphasizes a pre-public school curriculum which is cognittively-oriented and emphasizes English. Most of the children served are Cantonese. My impressions concerning language use are as follows: Approximately 80% of the adult/child exchanges were in English; approximately 50% of the child/child exchanges among preschoolers were in English, with this ratio increasing to approximately 100% among the second and third-grade children. Clearly, the emphasis was on the use of English, and the curriculum was most dominantly reflective of what we might call the 'standard school curriculum culture.' Parent involvement is very limited, and parent/staff communications are handled through newsletters and scheduled teacher/parent conferences.

Day Caregroup (a fictitious name)

Day Caregroup is a small program operated through a non-profit, community and parent-based board. The center serves about 20 children and has operated for a number of years but is unlicensed; the facility does not meet licensing standards. The facility is a standard 2-bedroom apartment and so is crowded. The staff/child ratio is within licensing requirements, but because of severe budget problems, the staff is composed mainly of volunteers. Discipline is strict, in response to the size of the facility and the wishes of the parents. Again, a standard day care schedule is followed, but the curriculum is based on nearly exclusive use of Cantonese. Apart from a formal, short English lesson each day, Cantonese is the language used by adults and children. Parent involvement is relatively high as is community support.

We have between Castelar and Day Caregroup several interesting contrasts. Let us look at the contrast having to do with language teaching and curriculum policy: Castelar emphasizes English and a pre-public school curriculum; Day Caregroup emphasizes Cantonese and a curriculum which is a blend of Cantonese culture and pre-public school skills. How each program arrived at these decisions is probably reflective of their respective administrative contexts: Castelar reflects public school practice and policy, whereas Day Caregroup reflects the parent-based board and community within which it operates. If a primary concern in

providing child care to Asian American and Pacific American children concerns strengthening the role and responsibility fo the parent, the following criteria might be used in determining major curriculum and language policy. These criteria are given in descending order of importance:

- -- parent wishes;
- -- local community context;
- -- specific factors in the local community which illuminate what is needed for children to become bilingual (e.g., home language usage, community language patterns);
- -- prerequisites for child success in the public schools;
- -- teacher (or other professional) or activist opinions.

However, an overriding consideration in child care when children are away from the parents for major portions of the day, often on a year-round schedule, has to do with the the basic needs of a child.

IV Basic Needs of Children

With few exceptions, children in child care of even minimal quality seem to cope. However, we can postulate that children cope because they have a will to survive, not because their support situations are adequate. What is required for a child to thrive, not merely cope? What are some apsects of *basic needs* of all children, regardless of language, ethnicity, economic status, etc? We have made some headway within Early Childhood Education and Child Development in understanding these basic needs, and it is important to consider them. Children in care are powerless and in our hands; and since they are powerless, they are also 'uncommunicative.'

What are these basic needs? Beyond the physical needs of adequate food, clothing, and shelter, we find the need for a psychological parent.* The psychological parent can be defined as the adult who has a loving, nurturant, continuous relationship with the child over time, and who therefore is the adult from whom the child receives love, nurturance, and advocacy over time, The physhcological parent may or may not be a biological parent. There is agreement that the psychological parent/child bond is essential for the child's sense of security and worth.

Research and common sense show that the healthy and good bond between the child and the psychological parent has these characteristics:

Attachment:	love nurturance security stimulation (education)
Continuity:	reliability of the above, giving a child a home or home-like place where he/she is a *member;* where, on a continuing basis he/she not only receives and returns affection but also expresses anger and learns to manage aggression.
	The child's sense of time is emotional and non-mathematical in nature, in contrat to that of the adult, which is rational and mathematical.
	Disruptions of continuity for the child are therefore incomprehensible regarding duration; anxiety accompanies disruptions, no matter how logical and temporary they may appear to the adult.
Advocacy:	The child's interests and well-being are of first importance.

*For an introductory discussion of the nature of the psychological parent/child bond, see J. Goldstein, *et al., Beyond the Best Interests of the Child.* New York: The Free Press (Macmillan), 1973.

V. The Child Care Environment

Let us now look briefly at some of the characteristics of the out-of-home child care environment to get a sense of what child care can and cannot provide in regard to the child's basic needs.

Attachment: The day care experience is an institutional experience for the child, as contrasted with the home experience. This may apply to home day care as well. Children in day care are dealt within groups, on a preplanned schedule, and are managed by adults who are performing a job rather than providing parenting. Thus, *love* and *nurturance*, while often present, are qualitatively different from the love and nurturance found in the child's own home. *Security* is usually adequate in a physical sense but not always in an emotional sense. *Stimulation*, or *education*, is the strength of a well-run day care program, and it may be provided in ways superior to the stimulation and education found at home.

Continuity: The best day care program, including home day care, may provide a strong sense of membership for the child. However, staff turnover nationally is at a 15-20% rate annually, meaning that approximately one out of five staff members will leave and be replaced each year; some child care programs, especially those with limited budgets and other operational difficulties, experience a higher turnover rate. Further, the *affection* found between day care teacher and child care is of necessity different from that found between psychological parent and child. And equally important, the child's sense of *time* is such that he or she may feel abandoned by the psychological parent, even though the parent may only be fulfilling a work schedule in his or her adult eyes.

Advocacy: Day care is a business, whether it is provided for profit or not. While there are strong advocates for *children* among child care personnel, their advocacy can seldom duplicate the advocacy of the psychological parent for that parent's individual *child.*

The child's space in day care is legally defined as 35 square feet. Privacy is limited to a cubby which holds the child's personal possessions, and most cubbys are very small and without doors. Sleeping is done on cots, on schedule, and eating is done on schedule with a group of children assigned to an adult. Indoor versus outdoor time, group time versus free time, organized activities versus free choice activites – virtually all aspects of the day care child's time each day are scheduled and held to by the adult staff in charge.

This condensed discussion could continue in the same vein. Suffice it to say that the child care environment of necessity lacks most of the basic features of the relationship that should be found between the child and her or his psychological parent. In terms of providing conditions which are likely to be less stressful to the child in day care, I would like to suggest the following list of qualifications for a day care teacher or aide. They are given in priority order"

- be committed to staying on the job for at least a year, on a year-to-year basis;
- be one who loves children and values them so as to be an advocate;
- possess the ability to know children as *individuals* within a group;
- possess the qualities of kindness and intelligence;
- finally, possess some knowledge of child development, teaching young children, be bilingual, or be credentialed.

VI. Language and Teaching in Day Care

The previous pages of this paper have dealt with matters of larger importance than curriculum and language considerations, and therefore to my mind provide a context within which to view questions of language and teaching in the day care setting.

I originally intended to say something about language acquisition, including bilingual language acquisition – that miraculous process the new human goes through from birth to school age which results in proficiency in one or more home or community languages. This must underly any careful approach to language teaching, as must knowledge of child development. Information concerning these aspects is available from other sources, so let us look briefly at how to decide what kind of language and culture policy and content should be present in the best day care for Aisan American and Pacific American children. I will again suggest a list, in priority order, which I intend to be consistent with maintaining support for the child and parent, providing authority to the parent in matters affecting her or his child, and still realistically looking ahead to prerequisites for the child meeting with success in a public school:

1) Provide a parent education program which centers on the pros and cons of handling th languages which are available to, and appropriate for, the child care program. Then ask the parents for their wishes concerning the language(s) to be included and the relative emphasis for each. This may be dependent on the age of the children;

2) Find out what the child needs to function well in the home community. This can only be done by personally becoming familiar with the children's home community;

3) Find out what is necessary for success in the elementary school. Since our society has compulsory education, and rewards older children and adults based on success in schooling, it is incumbent on day care to provide experiences to the child which are not contrary to success in public schooling;

4) Then, and only then, respond to your own biases, the research, the activists' and advocates' positions regarding bilingual education.

If the decision is made to provide a bilingual curriculum, following plans must include the time to be devoted to each language in light of the children's needs regarding the language(s) they speak, the age of the children, and their relative competence in each language.

Now, I would like to suggest a supplementary list of teacher or aide qualificatons if the day care program is to be bilingual. In addition to the basic qualifications if the day care program is to be bilingual. In addition to the basic qualifications given above, I will ofer the following – not necessarily in priority order:

a) must be bilingual, or work effectively as a partner with another monolingual;

b) must be aware of how much attention she/he gives to the talkers in the group of children, as contrasted to the non-talkers. Otherwise, differences in language use among children already present will be magnified;

c) must accept the child's language and be a loving friend;

d) must not be an 'interviewer' of the child, but a resource to the child. Related to this is the ability to balance controlling or discipline talk to the child with responsive talk with the child;

e) must be able to supply a third, engrossing thing for the child and adult to talk about. The teacher should be able to elaborate the matter the teacher and child are talking about, but should stay within the limits of the child's interest and understanding – both in terms of language and concept.

Finally, for discussion purposes I would like to offer the following notes concerning teaching and curriculum in a bilingual day care program for Asian and Pacific American children.

All aspects of the curriculum should be concrete, should allow the child to have direct, hands-on experience. Including things from the child's home is an asset and is especially important in day care. Parent involvement in this aspect can be of great use in this regard and will open opportunities for parent education and day care/home continuity for the child.

These are three 'legs' to day care curriciulum: the standard nursery school/preschool curriculum; home and community cultural aspects to continuously include in a concrete manner; and the interests of the child and teacher. Each of these curriculum 'legs' will suggest criteria concerning the organization of time, activities, and staff responsibilities so both languages can be best used.

Finally, the only type of home and community cultural aspects of the curriculum which can make sense to the child to age 6 are those which are immediately present in the home and community. In terms of the young child's development, culture-based curricula which rely on countries, peoples, and customs remote from the child are generally obscure and somewhat nonsensical to the child. Culture-based curricula which draw primarily on the child's home and community also offer the best opportunities for building the child's self-respect and respect for immediate others.

A bibliography of works consulted in the preparation of this presentation is available from the author.